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**Title:**

Press release - Legal age of majority

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The Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Dunstan, said today that there was overwhelming evidence nowadays which supported the lowering of the legal age of majority from 21 to 18.

He said that for all practical purposes 18-year-olds should be able to vote, sign contracts binding on themselves, deal with money matters, and be able to drink.

"The purpose of the Bill I have presented to Parliament is to give people of 18 the same rights as those given at present to people of 21," Mr. Dunstan said.

Mr. Dunstan said: "A report presented to the British Government last year is heavily in favour of the general age of majority being 18 for all purposes. This report shows that the proposal the Labor Party in South Australia is putting forward is quite feasible, workable and desirable."

"The age of majority has been generally static at 21 since mediaeval days, when it was fixed mainly as the age at which men could bear a full load of armour. It is time we started thinking in present day terms."

Mr. Dunstan said: "The report to the British Government states, and the Labor Party believes that:

- (1) no child or young person should in any way be restricted in his or her capacity or independence as a citizen solely for the benefit of any other person or persons.

and

- (2) young persons should be protected by legal incapacity to act independently, from having attributed to them legal responsibility likely to be unduly burdensome to a person of that age.

"These," Mr. Dunstan said, "should be the laws objectives."

"One point the British report does make quite clear is that the lowering of the age of majority to 18 would not mean an increase in juvenile crime. The report discounts such suggestions, and says that people aged 18 are able to exercise responsibility."

Mr. Dunstan said: "At the present time, an 18-year-old person is an adult in the eyes of the criminal court, and is sentenced as an adult. If this is the case, then surely the basic rights and privileges of an adult South Australian citizen, in civil matters as well, should be guaranteed to 18-year-olds."

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